

Community Preservation Act Committee

Date: January 24, 2024

Time: 7:06pm – 8:50pm

Location: Conducted remotely.

Final Draft Minutes

Remote Participation: Clarissa Rowe
Jo Anne Preston
Susan Doctrow
David Swanson
Leslie Mayer
JoAnn Robinson
Brian McBride
Alexander Franzosa

Also Attending Remotely: Christine
Bongiorno –
Deputy Town
Manager of
Operations

Deanna
Stacchi
-Minutes

Introductions

CPAC Chair, Clarissa Rowe, welcomed members and guests at 7:06pm. Ms. Rowe reminded the CPAC members that the budget is currently \$1M overbudget. Ms. Bongiorno advised attendees that the meeting was being recorded.

FY25 Applicant Presentations

a. Digitizing and Preserving Arlington's Marriage Records - \$155,194

Juli Brazile shared a presentation with photos showing existing documents, vault, basement and storage conditions. She noted that there are 100 years of records, including books and ledgers, that are considered working documents. Digitized files can be indexed so certified copies can be created without handling the aging, fragile documents. The current project would focus on marriage records but could expand to include birth and death records in the future. Ms. Brazile presented a schedule that would begin with bidding in fall 2024 and project

completion by Summer 2025. She noted that the project could be spread out over the course of several years depending on funding.

Ms. Robinson – The project is supported by the historical commission.

Ms. Rowe – Recommended that all departments digitize records.

Ms. Preston – Shared that a digital software developer who presented at Town Meeting advised that digitization does eventually become obsolete so original records should also be preserved. Noted that the census becomes public after 70 years. Currently the public census records go back to 1950.

Ms. Mayer – Requested yearly estimated costs if project was to be spread out over multiple years and inquired after the town's storage capacity. Also asked about the public access to the records once they are digitized.

Ms. Brazile - Consulted IT which is confident that there is enough storage and that upgrades are built into the capital budget. She also shared that the cost to scan one page is \$1.20 and indexing is an additional \$0.40. Each volume is estimated to hold 500 pages. Vital records will not be accessible to the public through a searchable database due to fraud/theft concerns and will still only be used to produce certified copies upon request.

Ms. Robinson – The IT department will know how to update the digitized copies as new technology becomes available.

Mr. McBride – Inquired about alternative funding. Ms. Rowe will forward contact information for advisement/assistance to Ms. Brazile.

b. Shea House Roof – \$30,000

John Maher presented the history of Shea House, named in honor of Bill Shea by The Salvation Army – Cambridge Corp. The home acts as a sober house/transitional housing for men from Cambridge, Arlington and Somerville. The current conditions of the roof are compromising its integrity and causing safety hazards. The project aligns with town goals for affordable housing. Douglas Hart added that the tenants of Shea House have been good neighbors and contributing citizens.

Ms. Mayer – Inquired about affordable housing qualifications. Mr. Maher stated that due to the low rent charged, he presumes so but will get more information to provide to CPAC. Ms. Rowe advised Mr. Maher to contact the Housing Trust.

Mr. McBride – Asked about additional funding opportunities, including a possible match from the Salvation Army or their corporate headquarters. Mr. Hart – Funds have been allocated for repairs in the past, including installing a new furnace last year, but are rapidly depleting. This is the first CPA request.

Ms. Rowe – Recognized Bill Shea and his wife for their contributions to the town of Arlington.

c. Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden Restoration Plantings - \$115,506

Meredith Zona and JoAnn Preston presented images of Phase 3 of the restoration project which includes Phase 2 of historic plantings. The project will include the removal of invasive plant species and the installation of historic plantings based on original drawings by the Olmstead Brothers. A diagram of the project showing areas of completion and areas still under restoration was shared with CPAC. Plant lists and drawings are still being created.

Ms. Robinson – Broke down the proposed costs -:

- \$33K - plantings (local and specialized nurseries)
- \$63,255 – labor, materials and contracts for upkeep, irrigation and plant care
- \$19,251 – 20% contingency for potential cost increases. Original estimates are based on Phase 2 (2023).

Ms. Rowe – Agrees with the higher request and contingency as the cost of materials is increasing and availability is less frequent.

Ms. Preston – Plants can be “tagged/claimed” prior to receiving the funding. Anticipated planting times, based on species etc, are for fall 2024 and spring 2025.

Ms. Mayer – Requested more information on the relation between historical plantings and native species. Ms. Robinson – No invasive species will be planted. Substitutions will be used if necessary but will be carefully selected to look similar to the original plan. Due to the need to substitute species, not all plantings may be native to the area.

d. Foot of the Rocks - \$1,200,000

Allan Tosti – The 250th anniversary of the battle is April 19, 2025. The group is hoping for the project to be completed in time for the anniversary. The request was broken down as follows - \$450,000 cash or \$1M borrowed, or a combination. Ms. Rowe noted that CPA would be voting on bonding at a future CPAC meeting.

To sign contracts, the funding is needed by May/June. Anticipated construction start date is July 1, to be completed by winter 2024/2025. Noted that informational plaques can be added in the spring prior to the grand opening. Additional funding may be available from the state of MA in the fall. If approved, this funding would be used to pay back “borrowed” funding from CPAC.

Ray Dunetz, Landscape Architect – Presented schematic design which includes stone construction, accessible walkways and trees.

Paul Fennelly – Shared the historical significance of the Battle of Menotomy as related to American history, noting that the militias from surrounding communities joined Menotomy at the Foot of the Rocks on April 19, 1775. Noted that Arlington Heights businesses would benefit from the creation of a historical gathering place.

Ms. Rowe – Bonding is a new issue to CPAC and will be discussed at the meeting slated for February 4, 2024.

Ms. Preston – Suggested appealing for state and federal grants as well as private funding from community businesses.

Mr. McBride – Requested more information on the use of previous funds, noting the significant ask. Mr. Tosti - \$50,000 grant was used to secure landscape architect, fund public hearings and develop Master Plan. Remaining funding was given back to CPAC. An additional grant of \$112 was used to develop specifications. Mr. Tosti believes there will be additional funds to be returned to CPAC. Mr. McBride requested a list of costs. Mr. Fennelly offered to get the information and will provide to CPAC for review. Mr. McBride also noted the need for shady areas and use of accessible public transportation as a result of climate change.

Mr. Dunetz – The higher cost estimate is due to inflation. Materials are now more expensive than first estimated two years ago. Has met with traffic consultants regarding parking and the additional protection from the “bump out”.

Mr. Tosti – The Master Plan is posted on the town website, including cost updates.

Ms. Preston – Requested a redistribution of the Master Plan. Noted the potential traffic implications of cars stopping to visit the location and requested additional thoughts on parking ideas.

Mr. Tosti – Noted that the final drawing was supported and praised after three public meetings. Better parking and accessibility is being worked on in conjunction with the Appleton Street project.

Ms. Rowe – Recommendation looking at the anniversary as a year-long event. The current deadline of April 19, 2025, may not be realistic considering cost increases and material availability. Mr. Fennelly agreed that while the focus will still be on April 19, 2025, the project should still move forward even if it needs to be extended.

Ms. Bongiorno – Will resend the Master Plan to CPAC members.

New Business – N/A

Ms. Rowe – PRC will propose additional project details regarding Hills’ Hill. Bonding will be discussed at the February 7th meeting as bonding will be particularly helpful and allow more

flexibility to Foot of the Rocks and Town Hall projects. Noted that bonding will still need to go through the SelectBoard, Treasurer's Office, Finance Committee and Town Meeting.

Ms. Doctrow – Criteria needs to be discussed at the next meeting to determine which projects would be eligible for bonding. Noted that more details and information would be necessary to help with potential cases presented to Town Meeting.

Ms. Mayer – Inquired about Town Hall restoration projects. Ms. Robinson stated that the RFP has gone out and that restoration needs and repairs are being documented.

Ms. Preston – Added that the town needs to have a plan for town funding for town building repairs and restoration. Ms. Rowe noted that town funding was provided to AHS and DPW projects.

Ms. Rowe concluded the meeting at 8:50pm.